

## Picking them up

The first time you pick them up, move them a short distance from one plate of food to another plate of food nearby. The next lift will be to your knees as you're sitting on the ground, and an open jar of baby food should be in front of their nose for the whole lift from floor to knees. Hold them as loosely as possible. Now lift them from your knees to your chest. Young kittens are often comforted by your heart beat and body warmth. Hold them close for as long as they'll accept it. Eventually you can stand up with them in your arms. Lift them a bit higher every day.

## Exploit their sleepiness

After a good meal when they're starting to get sleepy is when you should begin trying to hold them without the incentive of food. Hold them as long as they'll accept it and then try again later. Eventually space out these sessions so they're not docile with sleepiness when you try it.



## Play games

Play with them using a toy on a string at the end of a stick. This toy may even bring a breakthrough faster than food. Dance the toy gradually closer to your body.

## Joining the home and family

Get them used to different socializers so they meet a variety of people. Once they're comfortable with you, move them in a cage out into the house and get them used to household sounds and activities. Continue approaching them at eye level. A table top would be a good place for their cage.

Do not let them loose in the house until they're coming right up to you purring. If they go into hiding and they don't fully trust you yet, you'll have a tough time finding them.

Once they're out in the house, if you have a cat, he can teach them cat lessons such as grooming themselves. If your cat wants to visit them in the bathroom, just be sure they're healthy first and that his intentions are not hostile. He can be a good role model but should not be allowed to interfere with the meal time socialization process.

## Adoption

When they're completely comfortable with you and with home life, they're ready to be adopted. Let us know when you think they are ready for new homes and we will coordinate visits from potential families that will suit your schedule. Katie's Place must approve all adoptions; however, as their foster family, you have the right to refuse any adopter about whom you don't feel comfortable.

## Vet Care

Katie's Place covers all veterinary costs for kittens in foster care. Depending on the age of the kittens, we may ask you to take them in for their vaccines, for health checks, and anything else they need. This will be discussed with you, along with which of our vets to use. Kittens are very fragile and need to be closely monitored. Common signs of illness include diarrhea, lethargy, vomiting and lack of weight gain. If you have any concerns, contact us immediately.



## Additional support

This pamphlet contains several suggestions but no two animals are exactly alike. We are here to support your efforts to help these babies and you are welcome to call or email any time if you have any questions or concerns. Evelyn can be reached at 778-840-4943 or evelynbaillie@aol.com and Tracey can be reached at 604-463-7917 or katies.place@shaw.ca.

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# Socializing Feral Kittens



Katie's Place  
Animal Shelter

**Thank you for taking on** the challenge of socializing feral kittens for Katie's Place. Your efforts will help transform terrified kittens into playful house kittens and give them a chance to know the joys of being a loved companion animal as opposed to living a marginal existence on the streets with no regular source of nourishment, facing a wide array of dangers every day.

**Katie's Place will provide** all you need to care for the kittens including food, litter, dishes, litter box, blankets and a large 'rabbit' cage. The following information covers their basic care and tried and true methods for socializing them.



On the subject of litter, never use clay based clumping litter for young kittens. Like babies of many species, they'll put anything in their mouths, and clumping litter will fatally gum up their digestive systems.

**The techniques below** will socialize kittens up to six months old and even a few older ones. Socialization should take from two weeks to two months or even longer for the occasional tough customer. It depends on each kitten's temperament.

## Approach with caution

Kittens who haven't met humans before the age of eight weeks will panic at first contact. To them, humans are a predator and they'll fight for their lives or flee like hurtling balls of fluff that can even climb walls in their terror. They're fast as lightning. So use caution to start with. It is imperative that the kittens be kept safely confined. Katie's Place will provide you with a rabbit cage as a safe place to start young kittens off.

## Confine the kittens

Keep them in a small room. If they escape from the cage, they'll be easier to catch. A bathroom is ideal.

Prepare the room first. Wrap the shower curtain around the pole or they'll climb it. Put all cleansers and knick knacks into the medicine cabinet and keep the cabinet closed. Keep the toilet lid down. Block any spaces where a kitten could wedge himself. Keep the window closed unless there's a tight, secure window screen. Don't underestimate their ability to hide or escape!

Leave a radio playing in the room to help familiarize them with human sounds. Keep the cage on the counter so it will be easier for cleaning and feeding, and it will keep you more at their eye level so you don't loom over them menacingly like a predator. Once they've become a bit more calm and confident when you come in, you

can leave the cage door open or remove the lid.

## Be non-threatening

Whenever you go in, talk softly and move slowly. Don't stare at them, glance away often. Stay at their level, don't tower over them. Give them with a comfortable nest lined with clothing that you've worn, toys and a sturdy, flat-bottomed bowl of fresh water. Never corner them. Lure them to you with food.

## Food is the key

**Do not leave food there when you're not there.** If they refuse to eat in front of you for the first couple of days, leave them with food. But once you're sure they have *some* nourishment in them, don't *leave* food there. Take food in about four times a day. Heat it a bit to bring out the aroma. Set the plate down on one side of the cage or bathroom floor (depending on where they're living). Stay close to the plate and stay still. It may take a while but growing kittens are eating machines and they will creep toward the food.

Once they're eating in your presence try moving to the next step. Progression to each step will work best while they're still hungry and focused on eating. So don't wait until they're nearly finished their meal.

Place your hands on the cage bars beside the food while they eat if they're in the cage. The objective is to close the gap between them and you while they're distracted by food.

## Moving closer

Once they're living loose in the bathroom, you should sit on the bathroom floor while they eat. Put the plate down as far away as it needs to be to lure them to it. Once they're eating, slowly reach out and pull the plate closer to you. Move it closer by degrees. Eventually they should eat from the plate while your hand is still resting on the rim. Try putting the plate in your lap and offer them food on your finger. Meat flavoured Gerber or Beechnut baby foods are the most tempting for kittens and work well as a lure. If they won't eat their kitten food in front of you, use the baby food. Offer it on a spoon or popsicle stick and draw them toward you gradually.

As long as the kittens are healthy, using the litter pan and will eat in front of you, you can begin delaying their meals a bit to create more incentive to approach you. If you have some fast learners among the shy ones, lure the fast learners into a carrier with a small plate of food and work more with the shier ones.



## Petting them

Once they're eating in your lap or right at your side, begin petting them. Never move your hand toward their face, approach from behind. Pet the head and shoulders first. Lure them back again with baby food if they dart away. Now prepare them to accept being picked up. Stroke them underneath on their tummies. Give them small nudges or pushes as they eat.